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NSC BRIEFING

27 May 1954

INDOCHINA

25X1D



DOCUMENT NO.
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. X
IT DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C 2070
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
DATE 1-7-80 REVIEWER: 372044

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III. Viet Minh battle corps redeploying faster than French expected.

- A. On 25 May Division 351 approaching Tuyen Quang assembly area.
- B. Bulk of other divisions well east of Dien Bien Phu, heading for bases north and south of delta.
- C. This apparently means early June arrival, rather than French estimate of 20 June.
- D. French still have no clear idea enemy intentions.



- 2. Consensus of observers is: enemy may decide after return on basis political strategy Geneva, assessment of French strength and morale in delta.

IV. O'Daniel estimates if enemy attacks within next 30 days, French could not hold more than small Haiphong beachhead without substantial and immediate reinforcement.

V. French now trying strengthen delta defenses.

- A. By redeploying other French forces in Indochina:
 - 1. All or most of 15 French battalions in Laos will move.
 - 2. Five from other areas have already moved.
 - 3. Of three now on water, at least one will go to delta.

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- B. By plans for further re-enforcement from overseas.
 - 1. Eight battalions (5,000 men) to be sent with minimum delay, according US embassy Paris.
 - 2. Decision on 3 further divisions (30,000 men) awaiting General Ely's return.
 - 3. Paris studying chances of calling October class in July, to release regulars for Indochina.
- C. By study of possible reduction in Tonkin perimeter.
 - 1. One reported plan: withdraw to north of Red River-Bamboo Canal.
 - 2. Another plan: hold only Hanoi-Haiphong corridor.
- D. Such contraction plans:
 - 1. Mean abandonment of Vietnamese Catholics in south delta.
 - 2. May account for rumors evacuation French dependents in delta.

VI. Wounded French officer has reported on foreign participation at Dien Bien Phu.

- A. Said "foreign Communist officers"--Russians, Japanese, unidentified Europeans--served with Viet Minh (may have been renegade Legionnaires, wartime Japanese deserters).
- B. Chinese truck drivers delivered supplies direct to battlefield.
- C. Chinese troops may have been involved.

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- VII In political field, many reports received of continuing governmental deterioration, plots of revolt, civil war, rioting. A former Vietnamese premier described present situation as a "complete crisis of confidence."
- VIII In Cochinchina, gangster (Binh Xuyen) group to which Bao Dai delivered police control several weeks ago (in return for over \$1 million) have just about wrecked the security apparatus of Saigon.
- A. Hundreds experienced police resigned in disgust and law enforcement "dropped to nothing."
 - B. Binh Xuyen promised to support cab drivers in old gag of overcharging passengers: US charge fears this may lead to antiwhite rioting.
 - C. Reliable report says Binh Xuyen now having access to police arsenal, may well get into an armed battle with local Vietnam army units while trying to establish an autonomous position for themselves. Also, may fight warlord Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups.
 - D. Saigon press has indulged in unprecedented anti-US campaign past week, speaking of US "imperialism," Soviet "benevolence." This shows clearly Viet Minh unhampered penetration Saigon press.
 - E. Finally, Chief of Staff Hinh is believed actively planning revolt against Bao Dai regime. He said to be only awaiting fall of Tonkin where most of his

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IX In central Vietnam, picture described by one US official has "precarious and discouraging."

- A. Security, except in southern part, just about non-existent.**
- B. It alleged local militia would rather shoot each other than Viet Minh.**
- C. Large numbers peasants streaming into capital Hue and many believed Viet Minh agents.**

X Political picture in Laos, soon to be stripped of French Union troops, according present French plans, possibly faces a coup.

- A. This coup has been reliably and repeatedly reported for about 2 months.**
- B. Royal Prince Petsarath, supported by some Thai officials, been planning seizure government of his half brother and merger with other half brother Souphanouvong, who heads Viet Minh "Free Laos" shadow government but rumored disillusioned.**
- C. Petsarath, very popular in Laos, wants set-up anti-French, anti-Viet Minh government.**
- D. Reported earlier this week he would make attempt 27 May but yesterday we heard he had postponed action another week. Also, have heard his brother will stick with Viet Minh and not join him.**

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E. Petsarath could strengthen present regime, but
French will probably be able frustrate his ambitions.

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